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 r/electriczoo • 1 yr. ago
skidmarke

...

Why were Electric Zoo permits approved?

Update 2 (September 6, 2023): FOIL Request has been acknowledged with a due date: 10/10/2023. I'll update here as I get more info or if the documents come sooner.

Update: Got tired of people saying the west exit to RFK bridge via the stairs was "how it has been every year". I posted why that situation was so dangerous in this comment [here](#)

Original Post: Finally made it back home from this eventful weekend, but the question of how this festival ever got approved in the first place kept bugging me during the drive. Most of my work history has been in engineering and construction, and permitting/code compliance is a huge part of that. I checked into the NYC Fire Code once I got back, and there are a few lines in it that make me believe this festival shouldn't have been approved to begin with.

SECTION FC 403 PUBLIC GATHERINGS

403.1 General. *The commissioner may establish requirements to ensure fire safety at indoor and outdoor public gatherings, including arcades, bazaars, cafes, carnivals, displays, entertainment, exhibits, rooftop events and street fairs. Such requirements may include preparation and submission to the department of a site plan, including identification of materials, operations and facilities regulated by the Fire Code that will be stored, conducted or maintained in conjunction with the public gathering; pre-event fire safety inspection; provision of fire guards or other qualified personnel; and provision and maintenance of fire apparatus access, and of aisles and other means of access to and egress from the public gathering. Persons conducting such fire watch shall have the duties and responsibilities set forth in FC 901.7.2.1 with respect to the areas being monitored in connection with public gatherings. The commissioner may conduct periodic inspections of public gathering places that are used or frequented on a regular basis.*

Electric Zoo would be considered a temporary structure in the NYC Building Code, which gives it a lot of building code buyouts, but it would still need to comply with the standard Chapter 10 Means of Egress. Chapter 10 requires an occupancy of over 1,000 to have 4 marked exits, and those exits would need to be sized properly for the expected load of 35,000 people. The egress route at the west entrance (that became a nightmare Saturday night) is sized for about 300-400 to use as an emergency egress.

*****403.2 Overcrowding prohibited.***** *Overcrowding shall not be caused, maintained or allowed in any indoor or outdoor area or space used for public gatherings.*

Whether it was a good idea to let people stay after the gates were rushed Sunday (to keep the crowd from becoming a riot) or not, allowing/maintaining an outdoor area overcrowded is in total defiance of the NYC Fire Code.

I am curious to see how their occupant/egress calculations were completed, so I put in a FOIL request with the city asking for all documents related to the 2023 Electric Zoo permits, including comments from city officials and site inspections performed. I'll update if I ever get the documents and have a chance to see why this was approved by the Building/Fire Inspectors.

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 **ravingislife** • 1y ago

Money

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 **skidmarke OP** • 1y ago • Edited 1y ago

Hopefully not. Ideally, I'm just missing something or it's just something city inspectors aren't as trained up on so they missed it.

Guess we will see when/if the FOIL request is approved.

Update: Might actually be money. I posted this below in another comment

This website (<https://webdev01.manufaktur.com/>) that shows the parent company to Avant Gardner is WRE US Holding Company. The next link in that chain is WRE US Holding Company's parent company which is WRE Holding AG in Switzerland. WRE Holding AG's parent company is Wiederkehr Associates AG (also in Switzerland).

Philipp Wiederkehr is the Swiss banker who co-founded Avant Gardner with Billy Bildstein. So AG really does have it all when it comes to the extremely sketchy checklist. Lawsuits, scandals, Swiss bank accounts, and shell company after shell company.

So the chain looks like: Philipp Wiederkehr --> Wiederkehr Associates AG --> WRE Holding AG --> WRE US Holding Company --> Avant Gardner --> Billy Bildstein

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 **domeruns** • 1y ago

Please keep in mind also that AG's lawyer was the mayor's chief of staff until 2022. Go figure.

<https://gothamist.com/news/avant-gardner-brooklyn-venue-liquor-license>

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 **graveraver** • 1y ago

Don't believe their bs that 'supply chain issues' caused this. AG cut corners the entire week leading up to Friday, that why main stage didn't get set up in time. It wasn't the weather, two days of heavy rains delayed the build sure but AG refused to compensate for it. The steel team contracted are seasoned festival pros but AG's hubris and greed caused the fail cascade

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First, from the Federal Highway Administration at the densest capacity recommends 49 pedestrians per minute per meter (ped/min/m) for stairs, or 2940 ped/hr/m. Assuming the stairs at RFK is about 2 meters, this comes to 5,880 people getting on the bridge per hour.

In the Pedestrian Planning and Design guide by Frisk, The New York City Transit Authority reports a design capacity of 1,000 persons per hour per foot width for stairways. This is right in line with the FHA calculation above, but Frisk goes on to say *This level of service would only occur naturally with a bulk arrival traffic pattern that immediately exceeds available capacity, and this is the only design situation for which it would be recommended. Examples would include sports stadiums or transit facilities where there is a large, uncontrolled short-term exodus of pedestrians.*

So assuming 1/3 (about 12,000) of the festival was using this exit, and there was no path leading to the staircase (we just all were waiting to walk up it as soon as the festival ended), it would take about 2 hours to clear out the pedestrians. This seems like an excessive wait time for the festival to be ok with, but it isn't like Avant Gardner owners are waiting in this line.

HOWEVER, the bigger deal is these references also say at the same level of density for normal walkways up to 75 ped/min/m can be accommodated. Now the stairs are moving at 49 ped/min/m while 75 ped/min/m is pushing towards them from behind. The back of the crowd has a higher flow rate, but is being choked by the stairs at the front of the crowd, creating a dangerous bottleneck.

At this point, two risk factors (stairs and differing flow rates) for crowd crush are present for no reason other than poor planning/design. Paul Somerville with Risk Frontiers writes that *Once people are pushed tightly against one another (about seven people per square metre), those in the front need to keep moving as quickly as those behind them, because the people in the back, unable to see the front of the crowd, will move forward seeking more space, assuming that those in the front will continue to move to make way for them. If, for some reason, the speeds become mismatched because something is blocking the front of the group, or a rumour is spreading in the back that people are being crushed, this may cause people to speed up. In this case, the front of the group gets squeezed, sometimes producing enough force to crush people where they stand. and that Stairways can be especially hazardous. To prevent crowd crushes, it is important to predict the movement that a crowd will want to take. Crowd managers need to bear in mind the speed and direction in which the crowd is likely to move, based on the nature of the activity involved in the gathering.*

I never felt like security was managing the crowd in a safe manner, but that they were trying to move people out as quickly as possible and making the crowd density worse. I am happy that nothing tragic related to the crowds happened at the festival, but everyone who was forced onto the RFK bridge Saturday and Sunday (due to security pushing you that direction or lack of adequate exit signage) was put into an unnecessarily dangerous situation. If anything would have caused a panic in the back of the crowd, the front would have been seriously injured or killed.

Somerville, P. (2021). Behaviour and Mechanics of Crowd Crush Disasters. Risk Frontiers
<https://riskfrontiers.com/insights/behaviour-and-mechanics-of-crowd-crush-disasters/>

Fruin, J.J. (1971). Pedestrian planning and design. Metropolitan Association of Urban Designers and Environmental Planners <https://onlinepubs.trb.org/Onlinepubs/hrr/1971/355/355-001.pdf>

FHA. (1998). Recommended Procedures Chapter 13, "Pedestrians," of the Highway Capacity Manual
https://www.reddit.com/r/electriczoo/comments/16a3evx/why_were_electric_zoo_permitsApproved/

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I was at the back of that crowd. I was, in fact, among the last festival goers off the island period. I did not see anyone behind us at any point. It was 2 hours 45 mins from the end of zedd's set to our asses being in the seat of an Uber. I can tell you it was most definitely concerning. Even leaving the Gryffin set from the front on Saturday was scary. At both points it was very obvious to my group that if anything spooked the crowd or anyone decided to start shoving, we were well and truly fucked. I wasn't even walking at one point, I was being pushed. I've never actually felt unsafe in a crowd until that moment. My friend even turned around and said this is how people die. At that point we decided that for the rest of the festival, watching from the back was the safest option.

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**Pleasant_Review_6990** • 1y ago

The FOIL request is a good idea. But consider if there may have been communications w someone in the mayors office were 'off the books'. It's been publicized that the mayor and AG have shared the same attorney so some would say there's a connection there.

<https://www.wnyc.org/story/mayor-adams-office-set-meeting-troubled-brooklyn-venue-and-governors-aide-over-its-liquor-license/>

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**Pleasant_Review_6990** • 1y ago

You may be pulling on a viable thread here. Another place to look is mayor Adams campaign finance records to see if there's any connection between interested parties and Adams.

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**coreyferox** • 1y ago

Update us when your FOIL request comes back! I'd love to know what numbers and permits they were working with.

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**skidmarke OP** • 1y ago

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Someone last year said they had some deal with the police department to allow a ton of police in the grounds to make undercover arrests in exchange for permits.

I never found anything to back that up but after seeing how things went this year I wouldn't be surprised.

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hey over sold the venue to begin with. There should ahve never been a situation where 8000 valid ticket holders, who paid hundreds of dollars in advacned, to see an event are denied entry.

The fact the show was over sold to that degree illustrates severe mismanagement. They don't get to hide behind NYC code. They should have capped ticket sales to what the venue could have safely accomodated.

The other thing, as your other comments highlighted, and echoes some comments I've made in other threads, is that their entire line management sucks. To me as someone who has helped organize large events (not anywhere ezoo size, but 10k type events) is that Ezoo did an extremely poor job of laying out their venue in a manner that reflects crowd traffic.

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Compared to previous years, this year they expanded the grounds. Why? Probably because it gives them additional capacity allowance. So even if it's way out on the outskirts where nobody goes or uses, it may still be part of the capacity allowance calculation, which allows them to sell more tickets and make more money.

For the bridge and ramps and stairs, they'll probably say that's all public grounds, so egress rules for that don't pertain to them. They'll probably say their egress is the festival gate which is wide open and with large exit signs, well lit, etc.

[⬆️ 5 ⏪](#) [Reply](#) [...](#)[\(+\)](#) 1 more reply**robyn** • 1y ago

You're the hero we wanted and needed

[\(-\)](#) [⬆️ 3 ⏪](#) [Reply](#) [...](#)**skidmarke OP** • 1y ago

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But mainly the vape!

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Fuzzy_Milk7276 • 1y ago

Bribery 😱

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domeruns • 1y ago

Please update us! I have a little bit of permitting experience as well, so I'd be game to help out!

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TheBigAlbert • 1y ago

City approved it for the money. It's all politics and they're new to negotiations.

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